Contingency management (CM) is a behavioral therapy intervention in which patients receive tangible reinforcers for evidence of positive behavior change. In a meta-analysis of interventions for substance use disorders (SUDs), CM had the largest effect size of all psychosocial treatments. Despite its strong evidence base, CM has not been widely adopted largely because it adds extra costs to usual care. Without knowing the cost-effectiveness of CM interventions in community-based settings, policy and decision makers have little guidance in determining whether the additional expenditures on CM are worthwhile investments.

This presentation will summarize findings on the cost-effectiveness of CM from the perspectives of community-based outpatient clinics and the general healthcare system. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of policy implications.

Dr. Todd Olmstead is an associate professor in the School of Public Policy at George Mason University where he conducts economic analyses and research in behavioral health. His current research projects include: (1) estimating the demand for illicit drugs, (2) cost-effectiveness of substance abuse interventions, (3) cost-effectiveness of early intervention programs for youth who are at risk of future interactions with the mental health and/or juvenile justice systems, (4) cost-effectiveness of providing mental health services to low-income pregnant and parenting women living in public housing systems, and (5) the impacts of gambling treatment on healthcare service utilization.

Prior to joining Mason, Dr. Olmstead was a member of the faculties of the University of Connecticut and Yale University, and he was a Research Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School’s Center for Business and Government.

Dr. Olmstead holds degrees in public policy (Ph.D., Harvard University, 2000), operations research (M.S., UNC-Chapel Hill), and industrial engineering (M.S., B.S., SUNY-Buffalo).